



# Jackson in the White House



## Explore These Questions

- What qualities helped Jackson succeed?
- Why did Jackson replace many office-holders?
- Why did Jackson fight against the Bank of the United States?

## Define

- spoils system
- pet bank

## Identify

- Old Hickory
- kitchen cabinet
- Nicholas Biddle

## SETTING the Scene

During the 1828 election campaign, many stories about Andrew Jackson spread. Like the one that follows, they often showed Jackson's courage and determination.

Years before he ran for President, Jackson was a judge in Tennessee. One day, a disorderly lawbreaker, Russell Bean, refused to appear before the court. The story tells how Jackson strutted out of the courthouse. "Surrender, you infernal villain," he roared, "or I'll blow you through." Bean looked into Jackson's blazing eyes and quietly surrendered. The iron will that made Russell Bean surrender also made Jackson a powerful President.

## Andrew Jackson

Like many who admired him, Jackson was born in a log cabin on the frontier. His parents had left Ireland to settle on the Carolina frontier. Both died before Jackson was 15. Young Andrew had to grow up quickly.

## A tough fighter

Like many other boys who grew up on the frontier, young Andrew Jackson was a determined fighter. Even though he had a slight

build, he was strong and determined. A friend who wrestled with him recalled, "I could throw him three times out of four, but he would never stay thrown."

Jackson showed his toughness during the American Revolution. At age 13, he joined the Patriots but was captured by the British. When a British officer ordered the young prisoner to clean his boots, Jackson refused.

The officer took a sword and slashed the boy's hand and face. The memory of that attack stayed with Jackson for the rest of his life.

## A self-made man

After the Revolution, Jackson studied law in North Carolina. Later, he moved to Tennessee and set up a successful law practice. He became very wealthy by buying and selling land in Georgia and Alabama. While still in his twenties, he was elected to Congress.

Jackson won national fame for his achievements during the War of 1812. He commanded the American forces to a major victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans. He also defeated the Creek Indians and forced them to give up vast amounts of land in Georgia and Alabama.



*A young Andrew Jackson*

## A man of many qualities

Andrew Jackson was a man of many qualities. He had led a violent and adventurous life. He was no stranger to brawls, gambling, and duels. He was quick to lose his temper and he dealt with his enemies harshly.

Jackson's supporters admired his ability to inspire and lead others. They considered him a man of his word and a champion of the common people. The soldiers who served under Jackson called him **Old Hickory**. To them, he was as tough as the wood of a hickory tree.

To the Creek Indians, however, Jackson was an enemy who showed no mercy. After defeating them, Jackson had threatened to kill their leaders if they did not give up lands that earlier treaties had guaranteed them. As a result, the Creeks had no affection for Jackson. Their name for him was Sharp Knife.

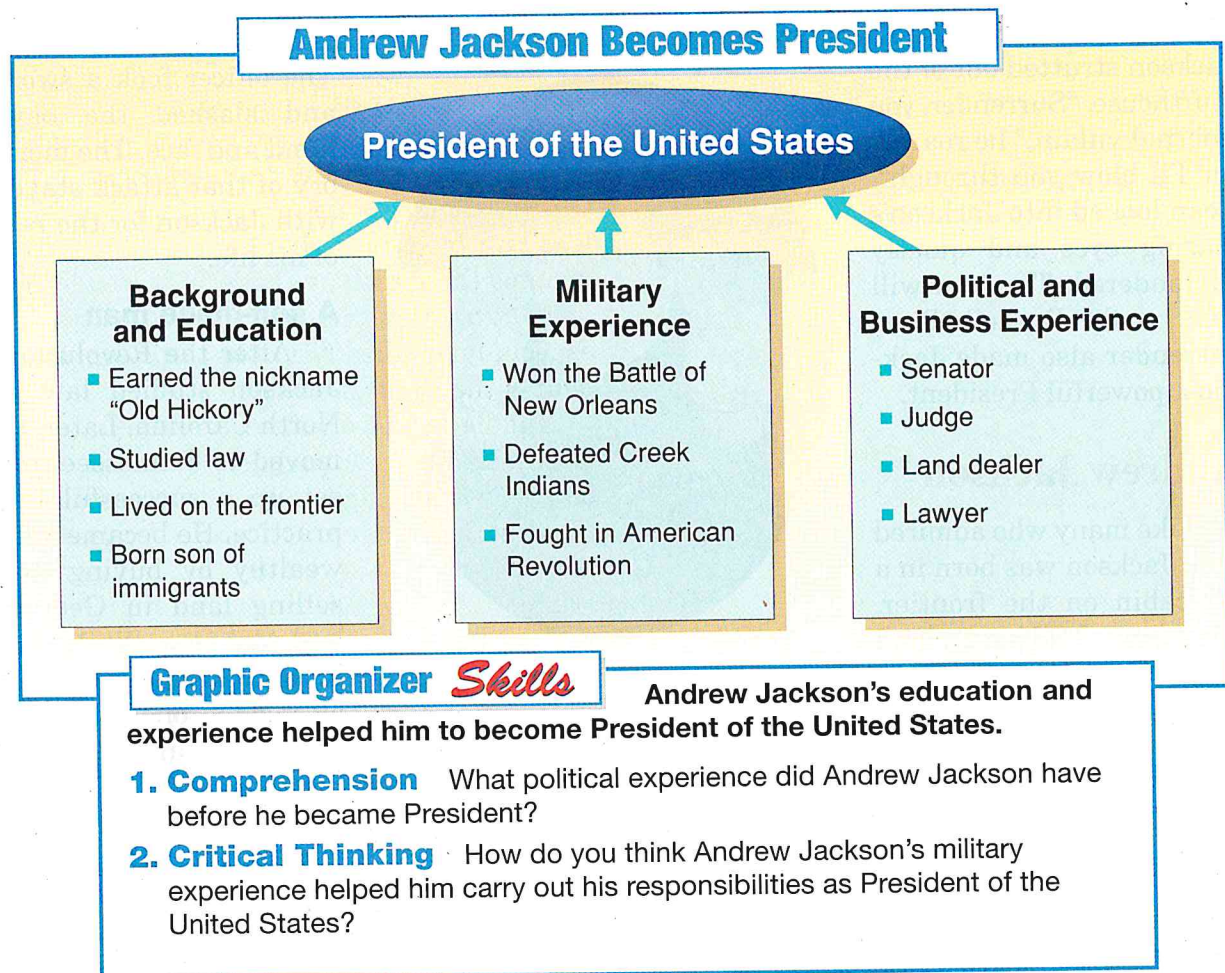
## The Spoils System

In 1828, President Jackson knew that Americans wanted change. "The people expected reform," he said. "This was the cry from Maine to Louisiana."

### Reward for victory

After taking office, Jackson fired many government employees. He replaced them with his own supporters. Most other Presidents had done the same, but Jackson did it on a larger scale.

Critics accused Jackson of rewarding Democrats who had helped elect him instead of choosing qualified men. Jackson replied that he was serving democracy by letting more citizens take part in government. He felt that ordinary Americans could fill government jobs. "The duties of all public officers are ... so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance," he said.





## Viewing HISTORY A Kitchen Cabinet Dispute

President Jackson often asked for advice from an unofficial group of advisers. This cartoon presents one artist's view of Jackson's "kitchen cabinet." ★ What was the cartoonist's opinion of the kitchen cabinet? Explain.

A Jackson supporter explained the system another way. "To the victor belong the spoils," he declared. Spoils are profits or benefits. From then on, the practice of rewarding supporters with government jobs became known as the **spoils system**.

### The kitchen cabinet

Jackson rewarded a number of his supporters with Cabinet jobs. Only Secretary of State Martin Van Buren was truly qualified for his position.

As a result, Jackson seldom met with his official Cabinet. Instead, he relied on a group of unofficial advisers. They included Democratic leaders and newspaper editors. These men had a good sense of the nation's mood. Because Jackson met with them in the White House kitchen, the group became known as the **kitchen cabinet**.

### The Bank War

President Jackson waged war on the Bank of the United States. Like many westerners, he thought that it was too powerful.

#### Mr. Biddle's bank

From the first, the Bank of the United States had been a subject of dispute. (See page 247.) The Bank had great power because it controlled loans made by state

banks. When the Bank's directors thought that state banks were making too many loans, they limited the amount these banks could lend. The cutbacks angered farmers and merchants who borrowed money to buy land or finance new businesses.

President Jackson and other leading Democrats saw the Bank as undemocratic. Although Congress had created the Bank, it was run by private bankers. Jackson condemned these men as agents of "special privilege" who grew rich with public funds. He especially disliked **Nicholas Biddle**, president of the Bank since 1823.

Biddle came from a wealthy Philadelphia family. He was well qualified to run the bank, but he was also arrogant and vain. Jackson felt that Biddle used the Bank to benefit only the rich. He also resented Biddle's influence over certain members of Congress.

### Connections With Economics

Today, the Federal Reserve Board supervises a national system of banks and has much influence over the economy. It can tighten the money supply and reduce inflation by raising interest rates. By lowering interest rates on loans, it can encourage economic growth.

## The war begins

Biddle and other Whigs worried that the President might try to destroy the Bank. Two Whig senators, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, thought of a way to save the Bank and defeat Jackson at the same time.

The Bank's charter was not due for renewal by Congress until 1836. However, Clay and Webster wanted to make the Bank an issue in the 1832 election. They persuaded Biddle to apply for renewal early.

The Whigs believed that most Americans supported the Bank of the United States. If Jackson vetoed the bill to renew the charter, they felt sure that he would anger voters and lose the election. Clay pushed the charter renewal bill through Congress in 1832. Jackson was sick in bed when he heard that Congress had renewed the Bank's charter. "The Bank . . . is trying to kill me," Jackson fumed, "but I will kill it!"

## Jackson's veto

In an angry message to Congress, Jackson vetoed the Bank bill. He gave two reasons for his veto. First, he declared the Bank unconstitutional, even though the Supreme Court had ruled in the Bank's favor. Jackson believed that only states, not the federal government, had the right to charter banks. Second, Jackson felt that the Bank helped aris-

tocrats at the expense of the common people. He warned:

“When the laws undertake . . . to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers— . . . have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.”

As planned, the Whigs made the Bank a major issue in the election of 1832. They chose Henry Clay as their candidate to run against Andrew Jackson. When the votes were counted, Jackson won a stunning election victory. The common people had supported Jackson and rejected the Bank of the United States.

## The Bank closes

Without a new charter, the Bank would have to close in 1836. Jackson refused to wait. He ordered Secretary of the Treasury Roger Taney to stop putting government money in the Bank. Instead, Taney deposited federal money in state banks. They became known as **pet banks** because Taney and his friends controlled many of them.

The loss of federal money crippled the Bank of the United States. Its closing in 1836 contributed to an economic crisis.

## ★ Section 2 Review ★

### Recall

1. **Identify** (a) Old Hickory, (b) kitchen cabinet, (c) Nicholas Biddle.
2. **Define** (a) spoils system, (b) pet bank.

### Comprehension

3. How did Andrew Jackson's education and experience help prepare him for the Presidency of the United States?
4. Why did critics object to the spoils system?
5. Why did many farmers and merchants dislike the Bank of the United States?

### Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Understanding Causes and Effects** How did the spoils system lead to the creation of the kitchen cabinet?
7. **Analyzing Information** What do you think the Creeks were saying about Jackson when they called him Sharp Knife?



**Activity Writing a Script** Write the script for a television drama in which Andrew Jackson and Nicholas Biddle discuss the Bank of the United States and pet banks.